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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000102

SIPDIS

GENEVA FOR HOHMAN

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TAGS: [WHO](#) [PREL](#) [TW](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: TAIWAN CDC DIRECTOR ANNOUNCES AGREEMENT ON IHR
IMPLEMENTATION

REF: AIT/T-EAP/TC-USMISSION GENEVA E-MAILS

Classified By: The Director for Reasons 1.4(b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary. During a January 22 press conference, Taiwan,s CDC Director announced an agreement to give Taiwan a direct point of contact with the WHO to implement the International Health Regulations (IHRs). Taiwan officials privately expressed appreciation for U.S. coordination at the recent World Health Assembly (WHA) Executive Board meeting in Geneva and, in public comments, made clear that Taiwan still hopes to obtain observer status at this May,s WHA meeting. While today,s announcement represents a significant step forward in Taiwan,s quest for meaningful participation in international organizations, President Ma remains under pressure to secure observership in May. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Taiwan and the WHO have agreed on a proposal that will allow Taiwan to contact the WHO directly to implement the WHO,s International Health Regulations (IHR), CDC Director Steve Hsu-Sung Kuo announced at a January 22 press conference. Kuo referred to letter (dated January 2, but received in Taipei on January 13) from Bernard Kean, Executive Director of the WHO Director General,s office, characterizing it as a positive development in Taiwan,s efforts to expand its meaningful participation in key international organizations. The letter lays out procedures for Taiwan,s CDC to contact the WHO directly (i.e., without any PRC involvement) while expressly limiting the channel to technical, and not political, exchanges. Kuo said the step was the result of improvement in cross-Straits relations, noting that is highest-level communication the CDC had received from the WHO since Margaret Chan took over the UN agency in 2006. Nevertheless, Kuo emphasized, Taiwan still hoped to secure WHA observer status at the WHA meeting this May.

¶3. (SBU) Shortly before Kuo,s press conference, MOFA Deputy Director General Lily Hsu contacted Pol chief to alert him to the upcoming announcement and express appreciation for the close U.S.-Taiwan coordination during the recent WHO Executive Board meeting in Geneva. In addition to Kuo,s public statements, Hsu said, the CDC Director would send the WHO a formal response to the letter. The CDC letter was the product of extensive interagency discussions that concluded late in the evening of January 21) driven by the need to close the issue before the start of the nine-day Chinese New Year holiday.

¶4. (SBU) Hsu echoed Kuo,s public comments on the positive nature of the development, but noted that the real test of

the agreement would come as Taiwan sought to implement it. Hsu also expressed concern about how Taiwan,s media) particularly those inclined to support the opposition DPP party - would view the agreement. Hsu agreed to provide AIT with the text of Kuo,s letter as soon as possible.

15. (C) In a January 21 meeting with the Director, National Security Advisor Su Chi expressed relief that things had gone well in Geneva this past week on IHR. The primary importance of the agreement, he said, was the WHO decision to come directly to Taiwan with information, and no longer route such info through China, an arrangement China had presumably approved. Su praised the excellent contact Taiwan enjoyed with its friends (U.S., EU, Japan) in Geneva.

Comment

16. (C) President Ma has called for setting aside political fights with Beijing (which Taipei stands little chance of winning) in favor of a pragmatic effort to advance Taiwan,s ability to have meaningful, direct access to key international bodies. From that perspective, this agreement would seem to be a significant victory for the President (and for the U.S. policy objective of supporting Taiwan,s meaningful participation in international organizations). One indication of the significance of this agreement has been the relatively positive coverage it has received, even from opposition DPP-leaning media outlets. Some have suggested that Beijing has now given all it plans to give Taiwan on WHO/WHA participation in 2009, and will block Taiwan,s bid for WHA observer status this May. This is based on the

TAIPEI 00000102 002 OF 002

premise that allowing too much progress, too soon will raise expectations on Taiwan and force Beijing to make even larger &concessions8 to support President Ma,s re-election campaign (or, more accurately, fend off a challenge from a potentially resurgent pro-independence DPP) in 2012. This overlooks the fact that the arrangement does nothing to undermine China,s position on its sovereignty over Taiwan. Such a position would also reflect a serious misunderstanding of Taiwan,s political situation. Whatever the practical implications of today,s announcement, in the public eye, it would not be a substitute for the symbolically-important observer status. Some have speculated that China will limit this to a "one off" invitation good only for this year. President Ma has built up public expectations for progress at the WHA meeting in May, and failure to deliver regular observer status may force him to take a less accommodating attitude towards Beijing.
SYOUNG